

Second Sunday of Easter 2020 (April 19)

Year A RCL

Acts 2:14a,22-32; Psalm 16;1 Peter 1:3-9; John 20:19-31

“Peace be with you”

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In this second Sunday of Easter, we enter in the metaphysical experience of our faith. The mystery of salvation happens in a tangible way as we recognize in the Incarnation of Jesus, the physicality of God who in Jesus enters human nature. Following the resurrection on Easter, the physical body form of Jesus is among the disciples in more than just a human body; after all, He had passed from death to life and is already participating in the glory of the Father. He continues being physical for the disciples to recognize him when he showed them his hands and his side. He is also spiritual and is above the limitations of the physical elements that constrain things to time and space.

The risen Lord in all His splendor appears to the disciples at the tomb the first day of the week. In the same way the tomb was empty, and He is present to selected witnesses, this time the risen Lord appears to the disciples when they are together. Surpassing the locked doors, He shows His power over the physical boundaries beyond any human explanation and greets them, “Peace be

with you". This emphasizes that His Peace is one of the fruits of the resurrection.

"Peace be with you" is also for us as we discover His presence among us.

However, this Gospel of John placed Thomas, one of the disciples outside of the group. When the other disciples told Thomas, "We have seen the Lord", his response shows the limitations human beings have in front of the mystery of unexplained facts- I do not believe, it is impossible to accept or understand, it has no logical explanation, this is not true, it is human invention. "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

This second Sunday of Easter stress faith and doubt as opposite responses in front of the human experiences. These responses are applied not only to the Bible or to Jesus' resurrection, but also to all aspects where there is human interaction. This second Sunday of Easter as it is also called "doubting Sunday", comes to us in the middle of a divided world caused by the coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic. Our country is living this division in first person. On one side, we find those that follow the guidance and advice of the scientific and medical community on how to behave or to react in front of this virus, which for them is considered lethal and dangerous. On the other side, we find those that argue that the pandemic is not as severe as doctors mention, they don't see enough

convincing reasons to follow the scientific data and want to continue as we have lived in previous months.

These two attitudes have similarities with today's Gospel in which doubt is present in ways that are beyond human reason. In the case of the Gospel, Thomas represent all our moments when we are unable to recognize or experience God's presence to the point of inquiring whether God is really close by or near to us. In the case of the pandemic and for the fact of being a novel or new virus for the scientific community and a new experience for the people in general, represents a mountain of doubt, pointing out how little we know and our incapacity to answer all the questions we have.

Something that deserves our attention is Jesus' behavior in relationship with our "twin," doubting Thomas. When Jesus appears again to the disciples, this time Thomas was with them. Once more, the Easter greeting of new life is "Peace be with you". God knows how much confusion and anguish Thomas and the disciples have. Thomas was bold to publicly declare his unbelief, and it is for him Jesus shows up again, to allow him to personally verify and give witness to Jesus' everlasting life. Thomas represents all our doubts and questions about God, and Jesus' answer is the same for us today: "Peace be with you".

Doubting is part of our growing in faith, doubting is part of the process of recognizing God for what and who He is. As we mature in faith, we discover that it is impossible to believe and explain the mystery and power of God in human language because we are limited. Our religious language is a metaphor of what we imagine, experience, or understand about God, and while it describes some attributes of God, it cannot fully express, nor contain the wholeness of the mystery of God.

The risen Lord knows the fears, doubts, and frail faith of all His disciples throughout the ages. For this reason, He continues to show up for the disciples, the first day of the week, when they are together, and continues offering His peace. No matter how much you believe or understand, it is important that you recognize when we are together “on the first day of the week”, the risen Lord shows up to offer you His Peace. For this reason, we continue coming back every Sunday knowing only God can offer the peace we need in our lives. Amen.